

From Uncle Clark of Penn

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Mr. Fish's

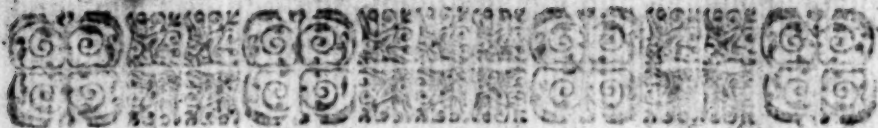
S E R M O N

At the Ordination

Of the Reverend

Mr. William Vinal.





Mr. Fife's

S E R M O N



At the
Of the Reverend

Mr. William Vinal.



Love to CHRIST a necessary Qualification
Gospel Minister.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the
O R D I N A T I O N
Of the Reverend

Mr. William Vinal,

To the *Pastoral Charge* of the first Congregational
Church of CHRIST in *Newport on Rhode-Island,*
October 29. 1746.

With some Enlargement and Correction

By *Joseph Fish,* A. M.
Pastor of the second Church of CHRIST in *Stonington.*

With the
CHARGE by the Rev. Mr. S. CHECKLEY :
AND
The Right Hand of FELLOWSHIP by the
Rev. Mr. J. COTTON.

JER. 3. 15. *I will give you Pastors according to mine
Heart, which shall feed you with Knowledge and
Understanding.*

NEWPORT, RHODE-ISLAND :
Printed by the Widow FRANKLIN, at the
Town-School-House, 1747.

Gospel Minister.

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To the Pastoral Charge of the first Congregational
Church of Christ in Newport on Rhode Island,
October 29. 1747.



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AN
Ordination SERMON.



JOHN XXI. 15. 16.
Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon Son of Jonas, Lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto him, yea, LORD, thou knowest that I Love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my Lambs.—Feed my Sheep.

THE Truth of the Christian Religion being put upon this Issue, "That JESUS CHRIST, the glorious Author of it, should rise from the dead, according to the Scriptures." Special Care is taken by the HOLY GHOST, to record such incontestible Evidences of *That Important Fact*, as might forever put the Matter out of Doubt, with all impartial and unprejudic'd Enquirers.

Accordingly the several Evangelists (and particularly St. John, in this Chap.) take notice of his Appearing sundry times to his Disciples, after his Resurrection, freely conversing with them, and working Miracles before their Eyes, to Convince them, "that He, who died for their Sins, was indeed, risen again for their Justification." *And these things*

(says

(says Christ, John 20. 31.) are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of GOD, and that believing ye might have Life thro' his Name.

Hereby our LORD provides his succeeding Ministry with a more powerful Argument to convince Mankind of the Truth and Reality of revealed Religion, than any ever had that went before him. For, now they can preach *Christ Risen* from the Dead, as well as *Christ and him Crucified*.—Now, they can boldly declare the Accomplishment of those wonderful things that were foreseen in the Promise, and spoken of by Prophecy.—Now, they can run with that joyful Message, “*He is Risen, He is Risen, as he said;*” come see the Place where the Lord lay—He is not here—The Grave could hold him no longer.—Having paid the Debt, this mighty Prisoner is set at Liberty?—Look up and view him triumphing over Death and the Grave, even *Him*, whom you beheld expiring on the Cross, falling a Victim to the Wrath and Justice of God!

This was a Doctrine constantly preached by the Apostles (as appears 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4.) And so powerful was it, that thro' divine Influence, it prov'd effectual to raise the *dead in Sin*. Thousands were converted at *One Sermon*, in which the Preacher declar'd of CHRIST, saying, “*This Jesus hath GOD raised up, (having loosed the Pains of Death) whereof we all are Witnesses.*” Acts 2. 32. 41. *So mightily grew the Word of GOD (under this Doctrine) and prevailed.*

Our SAVIOUR having thus provided an Argument of irresistible Force, for the advancement of his Kingdom in the World, does in the next place, take effectual care for suitable Persons to *use and improve it*. For 'tis not fitting that such a rich and sacred Treasure, should be lodg'd in common

Vessels.—

Vessels.—Stewards must, surely, be appointed, in the LORD'S House, to take care of, and deal out such Mysteries of GOD.

But who shall come unto us in the Name of the LORD, preaching JESUS and the Resurrection? Who shall minister unto us in holy things, feeding the Flock of GOD with heavenly Food?

I answer, our SAVIOUR plainly declares his Will and Pleasure concerning this Matter, in some of the *last Words* which he spake upon Earth: Which do therefore demand our highest Attention and Notice. By his declaring openly (in the last of *Mat.*) *that All Power was given to him in Heaven and Earth.* And thereupon separating a number of Disciples to his special Service, saying unto them, *Go ye therefore* (i. e. since all Power is given to me, whereby I have Authority to send you, *Therefore go ye,*) *and Teach all Nations—Go and preach the Gospel to every Creature,—* (by this, I say,) He lets us know, that all those who go forth to Teach in his Name and to feed his people, shall be clothed with *visible Authority* therefor, and have an open Introduction thereto; that they may be *known* and *acknowledged* by the People of GOD, as Persons constituted by the LORD JESUS CHRIST; and consequently, as having visible Right to come unto them with a Message in his Name.

But since *Power* without *Goodness* terminates in Oppression, and CHRIST will by no means suffer his Ministers to *be Lords over GOD'S Heritage*, therefore special Care is taken about the inward Temper and Qualification of the Mind. There must be a *gracious Heart*, as well as an *authorized Hand*, to compleat the Character of a good Shepherd over the Flock of GOD. If the *Love of CHRIST* be not the governing Principle, and the Honour of CHRIST the grand prevailing Motive, this dear Flock

Flock will be shamefully neglected, and lie exposed to numberless Injuries.

Hence it is that we hear our blessed LORD expressing the most ardent Affection and deep Concern for his Sheep, by chatechizing *Peter* about his Love to *Him*, before he gives him the Charge of his Flock. Being about to trust him with a most important Work and Business, even that of *feeding his Flock*, which he had purchased with his own Blood, CHRIST JESUS wou'd know of him, whether he lov'd him or no. *Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* Not that he himself was uncertain of *Peter's* Love—For he knew his Heart. But CHRIST is thus inquisitive about this Matter, to let us know, that *true Love to him* is a most excellent and necessary Qualification in a Gospel Minister, whose great Business lies in feeding his Flock. And that special care should be taken by all those who are concern'd in introducing Persons into the Ministry, about this Qualification in the Subject. Our SAVIOUR does, as it were, say to *Peter*, “*Simon Peter, the Work that I now assign you is of the last Importance,—attended with unspeakable Difficulty and Temptation, and I know that you never will be faithful in it, unless you love the Flock committed to your Watch and Care. But this you cannot do, if you have not an unfeigned Love for me: For my Flock is lovely, only as they bear my Image, or stand related to me.*” Wherefore, *Simon, Son of Jonas, Lovest thou me more than these?* i. e. more than the rest of my Disciples.—

To which *Peter* makes a modest and ingenuous reply: *He saith unto him, yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* While with holy Confidence he declares the Sincerity of his love to CHRIST, appealing to him for the Truth of it, he leaves it with *him* to judge of the Degree of his Love.

“Altho’

"Altho' I will not say that I love thee *more than these*, yet this I *must* say, *that I do love thee.*"

Upon this Profession of *Peter's Love*, our SAVIOUR gives him the Charge of his Flock. *He saith unto him, feed my Lambs.* — The feeble and tender Branches of my Flock, whether it be in respect of *Age* or *Weakness* of Grace.

He saith unto him the second time, *Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* He saith unto him, yea, LORD, *thou knowest that I love thee.* He saith unto him, *feed my Sheep.* The same Question is repeated a third time, and the like Answer given.

I sha'n't stay to enquire into the particular Reason of our SAVIOUR's propounding the same Question *Three times over.* — The main thing intended by our SAVIOUR in the whole of this Discourse with *Peter*, I think is evidently this, "to shew the Excellency of Love to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the Necessity of it in those that undertake to feed his People, as ever they would faithfully discharge the Duties of their Trust." Which Point I shall, by divine Assistance, endeavour to open and confirm under the following Heads.

I. Draw the Character of one that truly loves the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

II. Take some view of the near Relation of CHRIST's Church and People unto Him, under that endearing Appellation, *My Lambs, My Sheep.*

III. Shew that it is the Will of CHRIST, that his Lambs and Sheep should be fed: And what is contain'd in this solemn Charge to feed them.

IV. That the sacred Business of feeding CHRIST's Sheep and Lambs, belongs to those, and *those only*, unto whom it is committed by the Authority of CHRIST, according to the Direction of his Gospel.

V. Prove the Doctrine, that true Love to the LORD JESUS CHRIST is a most excellent and necessary

sary Qualification in a Gospel Minister, as ever he wou'd faithfully discharge the solemn Trust of feeding his Flock.

VI. Make Application.

First, I am to draw the Character of one that truly Loves the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And this is what we are all equally concerned in.

The Character of all Men by Nature is, "To be Lovers of their own selves, — Full of Enmity against GOD, — hateful and hating one another," if we may believe the Apostle Paul, *Tit. 3. 3. Rom. 8. 7. 2 Tim. 3. 2.* So that a true Lover of JESUS CHRIST is not to be found among the fallen Race of Men, until he has felt, or passed under, the Power of renewing Grace. He is then,

The Person of whom we are speaking, is one that has been happily cur'd of Self-Love and Esteem, by the sight he has had of his own Deformity by Reason of Sin. He is one that knows himself to be altogether as an unclean thing, and sees his own Righteousness to be as filthy Rags, which can never recommend him to the Favour of GOD.

But while he is rolling in his own Blood, under the mortifying Views of himself: Behold the Sun of Righteousness arises upon his Soul with Healing in his Wings. GOD that commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, now shines in his Heart, and gives him the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of GOD in the Face of JESUS CHRIST: The Divinity of whose Person engages the Lover's Attention, exalts his Thoughts and Conceptions of him, and with irresistible Energy wins his Heart to love him. For while he views him array'd with Majesty and Power, he beholds him full of Grace and Truth, — Mighty to save, — Disposed to have Compassion upon the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. And this recommends him, as the Chief of Ten Thousand, the altogether

altogether lovely. Now he loves him for what he is in himself; for what he has done for him, as well as for the World; for what he is still doing and will further do to compleat his Happiness. And hence, out of the Abundance of Love in his Heart, his Mouth speaketh.

But then, this heavenly Flame of Love, produced by the Sight of incomparable Glory and Excellency in CHRIST, does not spend itself merely in Words of Praise and Commendation. — No; it has a transforming Influence upon the Heart and Life of the Lover. — Beholding the Glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory. — Of CHRIST's fullness he receives, and Grace for Grace. That Purity, that Meekness, Humility, Patience, Self-denial, Love and Compassion, that appear'd in CHRIST, is stamped upon his Soul, answering to the Original, as the Wax answers Point for Point to the Seal. Having received the Spirit of CHRIST, he discovers the same Temper and Disposition in his Behaviour, that CHRIST was of: — He walks in him, — purifying himself, as GOD is pure. He denies himself, takes up his Cross daily, and follows the LAMB whithersoever he leads him. He has such a Regard to the Honour of CHRIST and the Advancement of his Kingdom, that, thro' Grace, he could willingly sacrifice his own Interest, Character, Ease, and every thing that is dear, for the Promotion of it: Rejoicing when he is counted worthy to suffer shame (really) for the Name of JESUS.

He has learned something of that hard and surprising Lesson, which our SAVIOUR taught; even to hate Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, Brethren and Sisters; yea, and his own Life for CHRIST's Sake. i. e. He knows what it is to love

CHRIST

CHRIST, more than he does these Creatures, as our SAVIOUR explains it, *Mat. 10. 37.*

He has, in his Heart, parted with all things for CHRIST, — given them all up unto him, and is not willing to take them back again for his Portion. In a word, he has crucify'd the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts, — He is crucify'd to the *World* and the *World* to him.

But suffer me still to say---that he who truly loves CHRIST, has such a solemn Regard for the *Truths* of CHRIST, the *Doctrines* of his Gospel, that he is not asham'd to own and profess them, --- to stand by and defend them, even when they are fallen into discredit with Mankind. *Mark, 8. 38:* *If any Man be ashamed of me, and of my Words (says CHRIST) of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father.* The *People* of GOD are also dear to him, — He accounts that truly religious Men are the excellent ones of the World, --- the very Salt of the Earth to preserve it from Corruption. He loves them that bear the Image of CHRIST, for the sake of that Resemblance which they have unto him. The Worship and Ordinances of CHRIST are very sacred in his Eye, as they are solemnly instituted by his Authority, for the public Places of his Residence, --- the channels of his Grace, --- the means of Communion with him.

Finally, The true Lover of CHRIST, is one that cannot dispence with any one, even the least of his Commandments; but makes Conscience of walking in Obedience to them all. *If ye love me (says CHRIST,) keep my Commandments.* And again, *he that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* He that hath my Commandments. --- This is doubtless emphatical. --- He that hath the true Knowledge of CHRIST's Commandments, endeavouring to keep them always in his Mind: To
which

which end, *he binds them on his Fingers*, (that he may remember them in all his Works, (yea, he *writes them on the Table of his Heart*, and *ties them about his Neck* (not only for Ornament, but for Use) *so that when he goes, it may lead him, when he sleeps it may keep him, and when he wakes, it may talk with him*, as the wise Man speaks, *Prov. 7. 3. and Chap. 6. 21. 22.*—

He that thus *bath CHRIST's Commandments* in his *Heart* and in his *Eye*, paying a diligent, chearful, and universal Obedience to them in the Course of a holy Life, (he) may be said to *Love CHRIST*.

To conclude his Character:—He not only *does* whatsoever *CHRIST JESUS* Commands him, as to the *Matter* of it, or in Point of external Obedience, but while he *Obeys* from the *Heart*, he esteems it his chief Happiness and Glory, to *enjoy Communion with CHRIST*, in every Branch of his Conduct.—

This is the Man that loves the *LORD JESUS CHRIST*.—And whosoever of you can heartily answer to these Characters, may, with *Peter*, appeal to the Searcher of Hearts, and say, *LORD, thou knowest all things. — Thou knowest that I love thee.*

Secondly, I am to take some view of the near Relation of *CHRIST's Church* and People unto them, under that endearing Appellation, *My Lambs, My Sheep*.

By the *Sheep of CHRIST*, in the most general Sense, we are to understand, his whole visible Church, — all that profess his Name. In this large Sense the whole *Jewish Church* are called, *the People of his Pasture, the Sheep of his Hand*. *Psal. 9. 5. 7.*

Taken in a more special and limited Sense, they are such as *do*, and *shall* believe Savingly in *JESUS CHRIST*, *Jab. 10. 11. 16. 27.* The good Shepherd giveth *his Life for the Sheep*, — other *Sheep* I have, which are not of this *Fold*: Them also,

I must bring with me, and they shall hear my Voice. My Sheep, (my own sheep, by way of Distinction and Eminence, as 4 ver. these) hear my Voice, and they follow me. The Lambs, (as hath been hinted) may intend the weak, feeble and tender Branches of the Flock, which are to be fed with milk, and gently carried in our Arms. 'Tis Observeable that our blessed SAVIOUR is, in the Prophecy, compared to a Sheep and a Lamb; on account of his Innocence, Gentleness and Patience, *Isa. 53. 7.* Which Figure of Speech in our Text is therefore very expressive of that Spirit and Temper, which his true Followers have learned of him and discover in their Life.

And now let us hear how tenderly our LORD speaks of them to Peter.—Calling of them, *My Lambs, My sheep.*—*q. d.* They are mine by Gift.—The Father has given them to me. They are mine by Redemption and Purchase.—I have given my Life for them; and hence may well be said to have bought them with a Price indeed. *They are my Portion, the Lot of my Inheritance* (*Deut. 32. 9.*) Yea, they are my precious Jewels.—*My peculiar Treasure,* (*Psal. 135. 4.*) which I value more than the whole World.

They are my Sheep by Regeneration and Birth. —I have travailed in my Soul for them, and do count them a rich Reward for all my Sufferings. Thus speaks the Prophet, *He shall see of the Travail of his Soul and shall be satisfied* *Isa. 53. 11.* And they are my truly begotten Children.—See the Image of their Father upon them.

They are My Sheep by solemn Covenant.—*I am married unto them.* Having overcome their Hearts with my Love, I have given myself unto them, and they have given themselves unto me in Marriage. So that we are no more Twain but One—being united together by Faith of the Operation of GOD:

By

By vertue of which, *I am in them and they in me*: So that we are *One* by the strictest Bonds of Union.

Upon these Accounts, says CHRIST, they are *my Sheep* — Emphatically mine: And I love them, and have washed them in my own Blood. For *them* I died. — For *them* I rose again. — For *them* I appear in the Court of Heaven, as their everlasting Intercessor, their unfailing Friend. You must therefore think that they are exceeding near and dear unto me. — Yea, I hold them as the Apple of mine Eye.

Thus strong and close is the Union. — Thus near and dear is the Relation between CHRIST and his Church.

And if they are thus nearly related *unto* and dearly beloved by the LORD JESUS, the Chief Shepherd, we may hence see what a near Relation the Ministers of CHRIST do stand in to the People of their Charge. If we are faithful Shepherds under CHRIST, we shall look upon our Flocks in the same endearing view, that our LORD and Master did; and treat them with the same tender Affection as he here expresses: For we are said, by the Apostle, to stand in *CHRIST's Stead*. The,

Third Thing proposed was, To shew that it is the Will of CHRIST that his Lambs and Sheep should be fed: And what is contain'd in this solemn Charge to feed them.

That it is the Will of CHRIST that his Sheep should be fed, is evident beyond Dispute, from the repeated solemn Charge which he gives to *Peter*, to feed them. *Feed my Lambs, feed my Sheep*; and again, I Charge you, *feed my Sheep*. — They are needy Creatures, and cannot live without daily Feeding. — But not to insist upon *this*. — What I purpose more especially under this Head, is to answer the Enquiry,

quity, which naturally arises, viz.
 Enq. *How are CHRIST's Ministers to feed his Sheep; and what is it to feed them?*

I must here take it for granted, what I purpose to prove in another place, "That the Business of Feeding the Sheep of CHRIST, belongs to his Ministers.—To Men set apart for that Purpose, according to Gospel Institution; and so is not a Work or Duty that lies in common among Christians." To answer the enquiry then, *How are CHRIST's Ministers to feed his Sheep? And what it contain'd in Feeding of them?*

I answer, *U*
 Neg.—Not out of their own stock, as if they were Lords or Owners of that spiritual Food, which they bring to their People.

Properly speaking, the Ministers of CHRIST have no Food of their own, that is fit to feed his Sheep withal.

They are of themselves as frail and empty Creatures as the Sheep, which they feed: And consequently stand in the same need of being fed themselves, as the very Lambs of the Flock do.

But then, for the Encouragement and Relief of Ministers and People under this general Deficiency, this prevailing Poverty, it has pleased the Father that in CHRIST all Fullness should dwell. With him there is Bread enough and to spare.—And He, even CHRIST, the Chief Shepherd, deals out of his spiritual Morsels to his Ministers, by whom, as Instruments in his Hand, the precious Food is convey'd to the Sheep. CHRIST JESUS does, in this Case, even now, as when he was upon Earth, he brake and gave the Loaves and the Fishes to his Disciples, and the Disciples to the Multitude.

They are indeed Ministers, in the proper Sense of the Word, waiting and serving at CHRIST's Table,

Table, distributing to every one that Portion which their LORD and Master provides.

In this sense, the Food which they bring, is not their own, but the LORD's. Altho' they are heavenly Dainties which we bring.—'Tis Angels Food which we deal out to our People; yet *we have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power might be of GOD and not of us.*

Hence we see the Vanity and Sin of Peoples looking unto and depending upon Man to feed them. *Why look ye so earnestly on us?* Says the Apostle.

Let this be remembered then, that the Ministers of CHRIST do feed his Flock only as Servants under him, or Stewards of the Mysteries of GOD.—

To speak more directly and positively in the second Place.—Feeding the Flock of CHRIST contains in it such things as these,

1. *That the Ministers of CHRIST do, in his Sacred Name, diligently Preach his Word.* All the Truths of GOD, respecting the great Salvation, (*even the Truth as it is in JESUS*) are the proper Food for Souls. Hence Christians are taught, by the Apostle, that *as new born Babes they should desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that they might grow thereby.* Accordingly he tells them that he had fed them with Milk, i. e. The Milk of GOD's Word. For as Milk nourishes the Infant, so does divine Truth the Children of GOD. The Truth therefore, is to be diligently searched out, and faithfully preached to the People of GOD. The great and glorious Doctrines of the Gospel are to be constantly set in their *clear and proper* Light. The Mysteries of GOD, of which Ministers are the Stewards, must be unveiled.—The Vision is to be made plain, *that he may run that reads it.*

The whole Counsel of GOD is to be declared;—*we are not to shun any Part of it, be it never*

so grating to Flesh and Blood.—Never so offensive to proud un sanctified Nature.

The Law must be laid down in its exceeding Breadth, that condemned Sinners may see how impossible it is for them to be justified by the Deeds of it. The All-perfect Righteousness of CHRIST must be held forth, as The alone Matter of our Justification before GOD. And in all our Preaching, CHRIST must be laid in the Foundation.

While we affirm constantly that Believers should be careful to maintain good Works, according to the Commandment Tit. 3. 8. We must direct them to look wholly to CHRIST for Strength to perform them acceptably. In a word; whenever, and upon whomsoever we press good Works, we must be careful to show that without Faith it is impossible to please GOD therein.—That we are accepted (only) in the beloved, Eph. 1. 6. Whether people will hear, or whether they will forbear, these, and all other great Truths of the Christian Religion, are to be seasonably dispensed, and the Event to be left with GOD. Hence that solemn Charge of Paul to Timothy, 2 Epist. 4 Chap. from the beginning to the 5 Ver. *I charge thee therefore, before GOD, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who shall judge the Quick and the Dead at his appearing and his Kingdom: Preach the Word, be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Longsuffering and Doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound Doctrine; but after their own Lusts shall they heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears: And they shall turn away their Ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto Fables.* Whatever success attends our Labours, yea, tho' we seem to labour in vain and spend our Strength for nought and in vain, yet we must go on, dealing out the Food of divine Truth to our Hearers.

Indeed,

Indeed, while Ministers are faithful to GOD, they should endeavour to come with all acceptableness to their People. While Truths are set in the clearest Light, they ought to be exprest with the most *Decent Plainness*, and rang'd in the most engaging Order, that nothing may be made more offensive to our Hearers than the Nature of the thing requires.

And therefore, as much Skill is requisite, so much holy Wisdom ought to be used in the whole Affair of Preaching the Gospel. It is indeed required in Stewards that a Man be found *faithful*: But then he must be also *wise*, or else the Portion of Food may be unhappily timed. Hence that Enquiry of our SAVIOUR, Luke 12. 42. *Who then is that faithful and wise Steward, whom his Lord shall make Ruler over his Household, to give them their Portion of Meat in due season?* Very seasonable and important then, is the Apostles exhortation to Timothy, and through him to each one of us in the Ministry. 2 Tim. 2. 15. *Study to shew thy Self approved to GOD, a Watchman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.* Wherefore, relying entirely on the LORD JESUS, in whom are hid all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, we are to make a solemn Application to the great and difficult Work of *Preparing* suitable Matter for the Sheep of his Flock. *The pure Oyl Olive for the Light, to cause the Lamp to burn* (of which we read Levit. 24. 2.) was, by the Command of GOD, to be *Beaten*.—'Twas not only to be *pure Oyl*, but *Beaten Oyl*—well wrought, prepared with Labour and Care.—So in the case before us.—We must not only preach *the Truth*, barely speaking; but the *Truths* of the Gospel *well wrought together*—well *studied* and *digested*—set off with all the Advantages of Gospel Light and *Divine Embellishment*.

What less are we taught, by the *Preacher's searching to find out acceptable Words?* i. e. Words of Delight; when 'tis observ'd, at the same time, that *that which was written was upright, even Words of Truth*, Eccl. 12. 10. This is one main Branch of the Work and Duty of Feeding *CHRIST's Sheep*.

2. *In feeding of them, the solemn Ordinances of the Gospel, particularly the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper, are to be duly administered.*

These are a Part of the Provision that *JESUS CHRIST* has made for his People, contain'd in the *Feast of fat things, a Feast of Wine on the Lees*, spoken of by the Prophet, *Isa. 25. 6*. And therefore may by no means be withheld. Hence our *SAVIOUR's* Charge to his Apostles is full and clear, *Go teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost*. And by eating the Bread and drinking the Cup, in *CHRIST's* Supper, his Death is shewed until he come, says the Apostle: i. e. until he come in like manner as spoken of *Acts 1. 11. visibly in a Cloud*, ver. 9. In these solemn Transactions, as well as in preaching the Gospel, our *LORD JESUS* has promised his gracious Presence with his Ministers to the end of the World. How then can any Man forbid Water, that meet Subjects should not be baptized? Or withhold the *literal Cup*, which is the *Communion of the blood of CHRIST*, without infringing upon the sacred Privileges of his Sheep and Lambs?—

3. *Feeding CHRIST's Sheep contains in it, the Ruling, Governing and Disciplining of them, according to the Direction of his Gospel.*

In this Sense we find the Psalmist uses the Word, when speaking of King David, he says *Psal. 78. 71. GOD bro't him to feed Jacob his People and Israel his*

his Inheritance; i. e. To rule, govern and guide them. Hence it follows, so he *fed* them according to the Integrity of his Heart, and *guided* them by the Skillfulness of his Hands.

And this is certainly One great thing intended by our SAVIOUR in *Feeding* his Sheep, who, thro' many Casualties and Temptations, are in continual Danger of running astray. Accordingly he has instituted the sacred Ordinance of Discipline in the 18 of *Matt.* And has settled all the Orders of his House, by which he will have the Members of it rul'd and govern'd, that they may be under better Advantages to be *fed* with the Word. And hence he requires that his Ministers should have the *Spirit of Government*, knowing how, in the first place, To rule *their own House*, that they may be able to take care of the Church of GOD. 1 Tim. 3. 4, 5. If any walk disorderly, transgressing the Laws of CHRIST'S Kingdom, the Discipline of his House is to be administered upon them, 1 Cor. 5. 4, 5. In which his Ministers are to lead.—And People are to be taught, and ought so to receive it, that the Administration of Government and Discipline in a Church is One of their *choice Privileges*; which they should by no means endeavour to obstruct or shake off, as if it were a *Burden* or Yoke of *Bondage* not to be borne. Hence we read concerning the highest Act of Discipline, even that of *Excommunication*, or delivering up to Satan, that it is designed for, and tends to the *Destruction of the Flesh*, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the LORD JESUS, 1 Cor. 5. 5.

4. It intends that Ministers should seek the Edification of their Flocks, in a more private way, by particular personal Application.

The great Apostle Paul did not think that he had made full Proof of his Ministry, or that he

had sufficiently fed the Flock of GOD, when he had only taught them *Publickly*: For he tells us, that he did it also from *House to House*, Acts 20. 20. Besides the public Instructions that are dealt out to whole Assemblies, *we are to go and visit our Brethren and see how they do*; alluding to Acts 15. 36. with some Restriction.— And in this private way, Ministers should acquaint themselves with the State of their Flock: Yea, the Condition of every single Person should, if possible, be inquired into, and found out; that we may know what Assistance or what Nourishment every Sheep and Lamb has need of. Thus runs the Charge Acts 20. 28. Take heed therefore, unto yourselves, and to *all the Flock*, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of GOD.— Which doubtless implies, that we should particularly enquire into the State of their Souls, and their manner of living, — Whether they have a Hope of their being in CHRIST? What is the ground of their Confidence? Whether they grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of JESUS CHRIST? What are their Spiritual Maladies, Temptations and Discouragements? And the like; that we may be under better Advantages to deal out suitable Instructions to every Soul.

5. *Feeding the Flock of CHRIST, supposes that we set a holy Example before them, worthy of their Imitation in all things.*

A Minister of the Gospel ought to be a *Man of GOD* (which is the most worthy and excellent Stroke in his Character) and as such he is charg'd to flee all evil things, and to follow after *Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness*, 1 Tim. 6. 11. That his *Example* may be as instructive as his *Doctrine*, and may be the *Last* tho' not the *Least* Argument, to enforce every Exhortation upon his People. Hence that particular Charge
of

of Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. 4. 12. *Be thou an Example of Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.* Such a holy, Spiritual Behaviour in a Guide, affords real Matter of Food and Strengthening to every diligent Observer. While Men behold a Minister *Living* and steadily *Acting* the Christian, they will be more effectually won over to the Love of Virtue and Goodness; yea, and established in it, than the best Instructions in the World cou'd possibly persuade them to, where such an Example is wanting, nay, I am perswaded the most excellent Preaching, followed with a vain and carnal Life in the Preacher, is one of the most effectual Arguments in the World to propagate Licentiousness and Infidelity. For such a one declares by his Practice, that *he*, for his own part, does not believe that there is any Truth or Reality in all the solemn things that he preaches. Wherefore, as ever we would feed the Sheep of CHRIST, to the building of them up in Faith, Holiness, and Comfort, we are to set them an Example in every thing, according to the Pattern which we have seen in CHRIST.

Fourthly, *I proposed to shew, that the sacred Business of Feeding CHRIST's Sheep belongs to those, and those only, unto whom it is committed by the Authority of CHRIST, according to the Direction of his Gospel.*

The common prevailing Error of the Day we live in, is this, "that no other *Call* is necessary to the Work of Preaching the Gospel (which is one main Article in feeding CHRIST's Sheep) than a Man's being converted himself, and feeling an inward *Impression* upon his Soul, or a powerful *Inclination* and *Influence* thereto." Which is an Error so big with Mischief to the Church of GOD, that I hope it will not be taken amiss in me, to offer my

my Assistance, with abler Hands, to remove it out of the way.

It is evident that the great Proposal, which the Gospel makes to Mankind, is, that they *would be reconciled unto GOD*, thro' his Son JESUS CHRIST. This gracious Proposal is made to the World, by the *Preaching of the Gospel*, which GOD makes use of as the most powerful Means of bringing about the grand *Design*.

Now, the great work of *Preaching the Gospel of Reconciliation* was first committed to the Apostles of CHRIST; as is clear from *Matt. 28. ver. 16.* to the End, compared with *2 Cor. 5. 18. 19.*—GOD *hath reconciled us to himself by JESUS CHRIST*, and hath given to Us the *Ministry of Reconciliation*; to wit, that GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them; and hath committed unto Us the *Word of Reconciliation*.

Hence it appears, that GOD did not leave this great Work of *Preaching the Gospel*, or *Word of Reconciliation* at large, to be undertaken and perform'd by Christians *in common*, as other Gospel Duties are: But he committed this Trust to *certain Men*, whom he raised up, qualified and appointed to that Work. He gave it and committed it (says the text) to Us, the *Apostles*. And upon it's being thus committed to them, they went forth as CHRIST's Ambassadors, and preached with Authority. For it follows, *Now when we are Ambassadors for CHRIST, as tho' GOD did beseech you by us: We pray you in CHRIST's stead, be ye reconciled to GOD*, ver. 20. They went not as Ambassadors for CHRIST, to preach the Gospel in his Name, until he had committed this Trust unto them.

And as it was not a common Duty, but a special Work and Business in the Apostolic Age, so it is evident, that effectual Care was taken by the Apostles,

to guard this sacred Business against Intruders, in the succeeding Ages of the Church. Accordingly, the Apostle *Paul*, who had so particularly noted the divine Appointment of the Apostles to the Work of *Preaching* the Gospel (declaring that GOD had committed it unto them) is very careful to instruct *Timothy* (who was an ordinary standing Minister, separated to the Work of the Ministry by the Laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, 1 *Tim.* 4. 14. And 2 *Tim.* 1. 6. is careful, I say, to instruct him) how he should conduct himself with respect to the Introducing of others to this solemn Work. As we have it recorded 2 *Tim.* 2. 1, 2. Thou therefore, my Son, be strong in the Grace that is in CHRIST JESUS. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Here it is certain, that one of the Things which the Apostle speaks of, as a Matter to be committed, is *Preaching the Gospel, or Word of Reconciliation*; for he expressly mentions *Teaching*. And gives a solemn Charge that it shall be committed to them that undertake it. Men shall not take it up, nor carry it on, of their own Heads (as we use to say) but it shall be committed to them.

Where we cannot, without Violence, understand the Apostle as speaking of its being committed in a *secret, invisible* way and manner (as some would have it) immediately, by the LORD JESUS CHRIST. So far from this, that CHRIST JESUS here teaches us, by his Apostle, that his ordinary way and manner of committing this Work to his Ministers, is *openly, by visible Instruments, or Men in Authority in his Church*. And there are no Men, since the Apostles, that have it committed to them in a gospel Way, if this Rule and Direction of CHRIST, in the Matter, be not observed. Or in other Words,

CHRIST JESUS does not commit the Preaching of the Gospel to any Man, since the Apostles, *but by the Instrumentality of others.*

Accordingly we see the Apostle's Charge here runs to *Timothy*, an Officer in CHRIST's Church: *Commit Thou.*—q. d. as the *Preaching* of the Gospel has been committed to thee, by the Authority of CHRIST in his Church, so do thou, in the Exercise of that Authority, which thou hast received, commit the same Care and Trust to others: Which very clearly and strongly holds forth the Agency of *Men* in the Matter; and Men that are in *Authority* too in the Church of GOD.

Neither are they to commit this Trust to *any* one that says he is *qualified* and *sent* by the LORD.—His Confidence in this Matter is, of itself, no Argument in favour of his Introduction. But they are to commit it to such as shall be *judged* to be *faithful* Men.—Men of Integrity and Uprightness.—Such, as upon impartial Enquiry and Tryal shall be found or judged to be true Men of GOD, Men that love the LORD JESUS CHRIST, such as *Peter* in our Text. And they must not only be *gracious* Men, and *faithful*, according to what they know; but they must *really* be *able* Men too; for they are to *teach others*, says the Text. They must be *able* to teach and *apt* to teach; yea, *able by sound Doctrine to exhort and convince Gainsayers.* To Persons thus qualified, the Preaching of the Gospel is to be committed by Men in Authority, as above: That is, the *Work* is to be referred to them; or to use the Apostles Words 1 Thess. 2. 4. *they are to be put in trust with the Gospel*, by some explicit *Act* or *Solemnity*, performed by such *Authority*; otherwise there could be no Sense nor Meaning in the Apostles saying to *Timothy*, *commit Thou.*—

All which does clearly and necessarily imply, that such *Candidates* for the Ministry, must be *Examined*,
Try'd.

Try'd and Prov'd by the same Authority; otherwise they could have no Evidence of their being furnish'd with the necessary Qualifications of *Preachers*, and consequently could not in Faithfulness to their Master *commit* his Gospel unto them.

This is the Order that CHRIST JESUS has established in his Church, respecting the *Commitment* of his Gospel to the *Preachers* of it. They therefore that undertake it without the *Countenance* of proper Authority in the Church of GOD, *manifested* in some way and manner that is *usual, known and approved* of, *in and by* his Church, must be look'd upon as bold Intruders, running before they are sent.

Fifth Head, *The next thing before us is, to prove the Doctrine, That true Love to the LORD JESUS CHRIST is a most excellent and necessary Qualification* in a Gospel Minister, as ever he would faithfully discharge the solemn Trust of feeding his Flock.

That this Grace is *absolutely* necessary to his *own personal acceptance* with CHRIST, is beyond dispute.

—And that it is not only an *excellent* but a *necessary* Qualification in order to discharge the great Trust of Feeding CHRIST's Sheep *faithfully*, will appear, if we consider a few things.—Many Arguments here offer themselves for the Support of this Doctrine, but, least I be over tedious, I must suppress them, and only say,

1. *That if a Man don't love CHRIST, it is certain, that he has never seen Him nor known Him.*

For he that has *seen and known* JESUS CHRIST *savingly*, has beheld divine Glory in Him, even the glorious Perfections of GOD. And such a Sight of him cannot be had, without being won over to the *Love* of him: *For GOD is Love*, says the Apostle.—And a true Sight of him must *beget Love*.—*Beholding his Glory, we are changed into the same Image,*

Image, says *Paul*. The Heart of *Enmity*, is changed into a Heart of *Love*. He therefore that does not love *CHRIST*, is certainly ignorant of him.—He does not know *GOD* in *CHRIST*. And hence the Apostle *John* speaks expressly, 1 *Job*. 4. 8. *He that loveth not knoweth not GOD; for GOD is Love.*

And then,

2. *If a Minister don't know CHRIST, how shall he heartily invite and earnestly persuade Souls to come to him.*

This is one eminent Branch of feeding, and the grand Design of Preaching the Gospel, even to win Souls over to *CHRIST*. Knowing the Terrors of the *LORD*, we persuade Men, says the Apostle. i. e. We persuade them to be reconciled to *GOD*: which cannot be effected any other Way, than by their coming to *CHRIST*.

Now, altho' it is possible that a Man, who does not know *CHRIST* experimentally, may deal out the Call and Invitation of *CHRIST* to Sinners; and may use true Gospel Arguments to persuade them to come to him; which *GOD* may, by his sovereign Grace, set home effectually.—'Tis possible, I say: But is it at all likely, that such an one will be at *unwearied Pains*, thro' the Course of his Ministry, to lay together all the Arguments of the Gospel to persuade Sinners to a *CHRIST*, whom he has never seen, nor known? For having never seen the excellent *Glory, Beauty, and Loveliness* of *CHRIST*—never experienc'd his *Power* and *Al sufficiency* to save—never tasted the sweets of his *Love*, nor found the Peace and Joy there is in *Believing*, he does not know the *Rest* and *Happiness* there is for a *wearry Soul* in *CHRIST*: And therefore does not see the Encouragement there is for Sinners to come to him. How then is it likely that he shou'd woo and beseech, plead and wrestle with perishing Sinners

Sinners to hasten their Escape unto him? This would be to *persuade* them to he *knows not what*; the Thought of which must naturally tend to make him *flag* in his Argument. But if a Minister does truly *know* and *love* CHRIST, then will he be *thorough*, *faithful* and *fervent* in persuading Sinners to *receive him* and *submit* unto him. *Love to CHRIST* is ever attended with Compassion to precious Souls; which draws forth the most earnest Endeavours to bring them into *his Fold*. A Lover of CHRIST will keep in Remembrance the Words of his blessed LORD, *Job. 10. 16. Other Sheep have I, which are not of this Fold; them also I must bring with me, and they shall hear my Voice.* And the Travail of CHRIST's Soul for *those* that are yet to come in, is such an Argument to warm the Lover's Heart with Zeal and Courage, that he will go forth in the Strength of the LORD, and (*if possible*) *compel them to come in.*

CHRIST's Kingdom and Interest is very dear to the Man that loves him.—He longs to see it come—to see it set up and flourish in the Hearts of Men.—'Tis what he glories in, yea, 'tis the Heighth of his Ambition.—He esteems *one* Soul to be worth more than the *whole* World; and justly argues, that 'tis therefore worth the Labours of his *whole* Life to gain, if it were, *but one.* Hence he can very gladly *spend* and *be spent* for a Soul.

Again,

3 *If a Man don't love CHRIST, it will follow, that he is not experimentally acquainted with his Truths, neither does he heartily love them.*

For surely, no Man can be said really to love CHRIST, the Son of GOD, until he is *begotten* and *born* of GOD. And *this* is effected by the powerful Application of *divine Truth* upon the Soul. *Jam. 1. 18.* Of his own Will *begat* he us, *with the Word of Truth.*—In this great Work GOD *puts*

H

his

his Laws into our Mind, and writes them in our Hearts—as Heb. 8. 10.—Gives us to know in our own *Experience* the *Reality* of what he has taught us in his Word. And hence it is that *GOD's Word*, his *Truths*, become indeed sweet and precious to our Souls. From hence it was that *David* could speak so feelingly, Psal. 19. 10. *More to be desired are they than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold: Sweeter also than Honey and the Honey-Comb.*

From all which it appears, that *true Love to CHRIST*, and an *experimental Acquaintance* with his *Truths*, are *inseparable*. And consequently, if a Man *don't love CHRIST*, he must be unacquainted with his *Truths*, in the Sense of *inward Experience*. And surely he cannot heartily *love* what he is unacquainted *with*, or ignorant *of*. And if so,

Then,

4. *It is altogether improbable that a Minister should courageously defend those Things, that he does not know, by Experience, to be the Truth.*

How unlikely is it that the great Doctrines and Truths of the Gospel, which are not only above the Reach of fallen Nature, but contrary to the Pride of our carnal Hearts, should be maintain'd and defended by those that do not *know them*, in the Sense that we are speaking? Is it likely that they will hazard *any thing*, much less *every thing* that is dear to them, in Defence of *something*, which for ought they *know*, has no *Reality* in it? So long, indeed, as the Doctrines are in Credit, and the Religion that teaches them is *fashionable*, they may rise up in Defence of them, and may seem to advocate for them with Resolution and Zeal: Yea, they may stand by them so long as Self, personal Interest, Honour, Ease and Safety, depend upon them, and may be supported by them: But, take away those Creature Props.—Let the Religion before us be every where spoken against.—The Truths in Question.

tion rejected and the Doctrines laugh'd at;—Let Honour rise in the other Scale, and Interest shift to the other Side;—Let the Times be changed, and the *unexperienced Man* will be very likely to change with the Times, and profess to see Things in another Light.

But an Acquaintance with divine Truth, which is inseparable from the Love of CHRIST, will imbolden a Man to risque his Character, Interest and Life in its Defence. The Temptation must be very strong indeed, to make a Man asham'd to profess, or afraid to advance and inculcate those Things, which are verified in his own Soul by daily Experience. Besides, he knows them to be the Doctrines of JESUS CHRIST; and therefore, in Honour to his LORD and MASTER, he will defend them. For surely, a faithful Subject will stand by his Master's Cause.

5. *True Love to JESUS CHRIST has a mighty Influence upon a Minister, in the Choice and Distribution of sutable Food for the Lambs and Sheep of his Flock.*

This Love is attended with an ardent Desire to entertain the People of GOD, at all Times, with the most sutable, wholesome and profitable Food. For they are the most worthy Guests—Subjects of a great KING, and Children of his best Friend. And therefore in Honour to his LORD, he has a holy Ambition to serve them with the best Provision of GOD's House.

Now, having had Experience in his own Soul, of the Wants, Maladies, Temptations and Sorrows that attend a Pilgrim in his Journey to Heaven; and having found Relief in CHRIST under them all, he from thence knows how to minister to the necessities of the Saints. For GOD (says the Apostle) *comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any Trouble, by the*
comfort.

Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of GOD,
2 Cor. i. 4.

A Lover of JESUS CHRIST knows the Heart of a Stranger---and being taught of GOD, he has Arguments at hand to strengthen the weak, confirm the feeble, and encourage the fearful. His own Poverty and Miseries have made him an importunate Beggar at the Throne of Grace.---He knows how to wrestle with GOD for himself and his People ---His Wants have made him eloquent, and having the *Tongue of the Learned*, he knows how to speak a *Word in season to the weary Soul*. In a word, Love to CHRIST will bring out the fatted Calf for his Children---the richest Dainties in all the Gospel Feast; and he thinks nothing too good for the Sheep and Lambs of his dearest LORD. Such a mighty Influence, has the Love of CHRIST, in the great Affair of dealing out a Portion to every One in his season.

Besides, how can a Minister love the Flock of CHRIST (which is so necessary in order to his tending of them faithfully, at all seasons, and under all Circumstances) if he does not love CHRIST himself?---How shall he *bear with them* and treat them with *Pity* and *Compassion* under all their *Infirmities* and *Changes*?---How shall he endure all the *Hardness* that attends the Work and Warfare before him, while he approves himself a Minister of GOD in Afflictions, in Necessities, in Distresses---by Honour and Dishonour, by evil Report and good Report?---How shall a Minister go through all this Labour, and behave with Decency under all these Tryals, if he be not animated with unfeign'd Love to JESUS CHRIST? 'Tis surely impracticable, if not impossible.---But I may not enlarge upon these Arguments.

For such Reasons as these, I am persuaded, and therefore have said it, "That Love to JESUS CHRIST is,

is, not only an *excellent*, but a most *necessary* Qualification, in a Gospel Minister, as ever he would faithfully feed the Sheep of his Flock." All that remains is The

APPLICATION

From the view that we have had of the Love of CHRIST, as to what it is, and the Necessity of it to feed the Flock of GOD, as they ought to be fed,

we may learn,

1. *That it should be the greatest Concern of Gospel Ministers to know that they love CHRIST, and see that they abound in this Grace.*

The Argument for *Assurance* of the Love of CHRIST, in *Ministers* Souls, is doubly strong. For if *they* are destitute of this Grace of Love, they will not only lose their own Souls, but will eminently endanger the Souls of others.

The *Importance* of this Grace in Ministers (as it hath been argued) will intitle me to the utmost Freedom, with all Affection and Reverence, in *pressing* upon my Brethren in the Ministry, as well as upon myself, the *Argument* of this Day concerning the Love of CHRIST.—

REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN,

We have undertaken to feed the Flock of CHRIST; and have stood in the Place of Shepherds for Days and Years; professedly *engag'd* in the Business of *Feeding his Sheep*. But how have we approved ourselves to GOD and *Them*? Is it evident to our own Souls, and have we given good Proof to the People of GOD, that we have this *Main* Qualification for such a Trust, even Love to JESUS CHRIST? It is surely, high Time for us to *know* that we *do love him*. And the Question of our Text

is not out of season to any one of us, *Lovest thou me?* Can we with humble Confidence appeal to him who searches the Heart, and say, *LORD thou knowest that I Love thee?* Or does the Guilt of our Consciences flash in our Faces, and forbid our Tongues to utter what our Hearts condemn us for?

Did we undertake this solemn Work from the Love we had to JESUS CHRIST—From an ardent Affection for his Flock and Compassion to perishing Souls? Has the same Love prevailed in our Hearts ever since, and flamed out in our Lives, carrying of us forth thro' all the Branches of our Trust, with Patience, Diligence and Zeal? Or have we obtained of GOD, this unspeakable Mercy and Grace, since we came into the sacred Office? And are we now doubling our Diligence and redeeming the Time which we sinfully lost?—Let Conscience bring in her Verdict, this Day, and fully acquit us, or faithfully condemn us.—

O MY BRETHREN, with what Comfort or Courage can we go on in our Work, destitute of all good Evidences of Love to CHRIST? How can we declare to our People from day to day, in these awful Words of our LORD JESUS, *He that believeth not shall be damned.*—And if any Man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema, when Conscience applies the Sentence to him that speaketh, saying, *Thou art the Man!* Or with what Arguments shall we press the Sinners to fly for Refuge unto JESUS; when our own Hearts reproach us with the damning Sin of *Refusing him and Flying from him?*

O what Shame and Confusion must cover the Head of such a Watchman, when he meets the mourning Spouse, the *deserted Believer*, with that earnest Enquiry in his Mouth, *Saw you him whom my Soul loveth?* What could he say in such a Case?—What could

could he do for the Comfort and Direction of such a Soul?—Must he not be dumb with Silence before him, while his Conscience makes that cutting Reply, “I know not the LORD, neither do I love him?”

Finally, How shall we appear at Death, or at the Great Day, when our LORD shall demand of us an Account of our Stewardship? Will it not then be found that we have wasted our LORD's Goods, for Want of Love to his Person, and a tender regard to his Interest? If so, our Account will be sad and awful! And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear to divide the Sheep from the Goats, how dreadful!—yea, how full of Horror is the Thought, of being separated, our selves from CHRIST and from the Flock which we pretended to feed!—Or, of being found among the Goats, and falling under the same Condemnation with them!—In vain shall we then plead, saying, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name?*—He will say unto us, I know you not—The Sentence of the Law is, Depart!

I beseech you, Brethren, let such moving Arguments, as these, excite us all to make sure of this one thing, even Love to CHRIST. Yea, let us see that we are full of it, and abound in it, that we may not only escape the dreadful things that have been suggested, but that we may enjoy the unspeakable Comfort of CHRIST's Presence in our trying Work; and so be instrumental of turning many to Righteousness; that the Blessing of many, ready to perish, may come upon us, which I hope is really the Case, altho' I have thus spoken.

Let us look to our blessed MASTER for larger Measures of his Love, and for every Grace of his holy Spirit, that we may obtain Mercy to be faithful, thro' the whole of our sacred Trust: That when our Departure is at hand, we may join with holy Paul, and say, *We have fought the good Fight, we have*

have finished our Course, we have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for us a Crown of Righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous Judge shall give unto us at that Day.—

2. From what has been said, we learn what *Care* a *People* ought to take in *choosing*, and *Ministers* in *introducing* such Persons to the Work before us, *as are indeed true Lovers of JESUS CHRIST.*

I would not here be understood to suggest, that I so much as imagine that this is a Matter which is *wholly neglected*.---But knowing, from my own Experience what Temptations we are under to do this Work *overly* and *partially*, I would, again, take Liberty to press the Duty *home* by some awakening Considerations.

It must be granted, indeed, that after all our Care and Pains in this Matter, both Ministers and People *may be deceived*.---And doubtless G O D does sometimes punish the *crying Sin* of a People, in their *Disregarding* his preached Gospel, by sending one among them that *knows not the LORD JESUS*.---But how can our Consciences be clear of Guilt, if we don't apply our selves, with the deepest Concern, to obtain a true *Lover* of JESUS CHRIST, to *feed his Sheep*?

A People should first look to the Chief Shepherd, and follow suit by daily earnest Prayer, that he would mercifully *give them a Pastor after his own Heart, that may feed them with Knowledge and Understanding.* And they should *believe* in his Promise (*Jer. 3. 15.*) that he will do it for them. And when they can find a Man, whose *Inward Experience* of divine things is *Hopeful*;---whose *Preaching* is sound, instructive, searching and faithful;---whose *Conversation* is heavenly, and *Life* exemplary, they may receive him as a Messenger sent from G O D; and, notwithstanding human Imperfections, they ought to Treat and Honour him as such. And the Interest

terest of their Souls being so nearly concerned in their having such a Shepherd (as we have heard) is alone Argument sufficient to excite this Care in them.

But then, how deep should be the Concern?—How exquisite the Search and Enquiry, of *CHRIST's Ministers* especially, about this *internal Qualification*, in those whom they approve of, and separate to the work of the Ministry?—Surely, our grand Enquiry and Concern should be, after a *true Lover of JESUS CHRIST*, to take care of his Sheep.

We have heard how inquisitive our great and blessed MASTER was, about this precious Grace of *Love*, in *Peter*, before he would commit to him the Charge of feeding his Flock. *Simon, Son of Jonas, Lovest thou me—Lovest thou me—Lovest thou me?* If thou dost, then feed my Lambs, feed my Sheep. And what think you, my Brethren, is not this recorded for our Instruction;—Hasn't our LORD and MASTER herein set us an Example, that we should follow his Steps?—Shall he express such a Concern in this *Grand Affair* of feeding his Flock, and shall not we, his Ministers, follow him, upon the same solemn Occasion? Surely we shou'd, yea, tho' the Person may be troubled as *Peter* was, yet this should by no means make us ashamed or afraid to urge the Matter home, and search as deep as we can after this hidden Treasure.

His *Learning*, his *Courage*, his *Wisdom* and *Prudence*, his *Aptness* to teach, his *Skill* in *convincing Gainsayers* and *defending the Truth*.

These, and such like Gifts of the Spirit, are eminent Parts of a Minister's Furniture, and ought to be look'd into; nay, these should by no means be Wanting.—But what are they all, without the *Grace of Love*? With these, indeed, he may charm his Hearers, but while he remains himself as a deaf Adder; they will but serve to carry him with the

greater Pomp and Solemnity to Hell. The main Enquiry ought to be, *Whether he is a Man of GOD?* Whether he loves the LORD JESUS CHRIST? If we would consult *his* own Safety, or the People's best Good.

This is a great Part of the Trust reposed in us. And Faithfulness to JESUS CHRIST, as well as Love to precious Souls, indispensibly Oblige us, to take all possible Care, that his Flock may be committed to the Watch of such as love him, who has loved them, and given Himself for them.

Ought we not to love the Flock of CHRIST our selves? Surely we ought.—But how can we say that we love them, if we put them under the Care of one that will devour them, rather than feed them? As we very likely shall, if we are not inquisitive about the Love of JESUS CHRIST in his Soul. And is this tender?—Is this kind and faithful in us, thus to neglect and expose the feeble Lambs and timorous Sheep of CHRIST? No verily.—How then, can we, the Ministers of the compassionate Jesus, ever suffer ourselves to be careless in this Matter?—

Besides, how can we look our Master in the Face, *this Night, at Death*, or at the Great Day, and tell him, “LORD, we thy Servants, have committed thy Flock to the Watch of an *Eloquent Man*; but as to his *inward Grace*, we were not inquisitive after that.—Remembring that (as thou hast taught us) thou only searchest the Hearts and tryest the Reins.—Thou knowest whether he loves thee or not: But as for us, we scarce ever ask'd the Question or sought for Evidence; And so are altogether uncertain whether he has a hearty Love for thee, or is under the Power of implacable Enmity against thee.” How would such a Report as this be received by our tender-hearted LORD and MASTER?—Would he not say unto us, “These my Sheep are as dear to me as my Life.—I spilt my Blood to save them; And

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my Pleasure is, that they should have one to feed them, who loves *me*, and tenderly affects *them*. But now, for ought you *know*, and, (it seems) for ought that you *care*, they are committed to the Watch of an *Enemy*.—And is *this your Kindness to your Friend*? How could you?—How dare you thus betray my Cause and Interest?—For CHRIST's Sake, then, my Brethren, let us be thorough and faithful in this Part of our Trust. While we are in the Vineyard, let us always Act as Men that are accountable to JESUS CHRIST in this Matter, that we may give up our Account with Joy. Let us always remember, that CHRIST's Flock are exceeding *near* and *dear* to him.—They lie close to his Heart.—They are the beloved of his Soul. We are therefore under the strongest Bonds to shew our Love to CHRIST, by sending such Men to feed his People, as we have good Grounds to hope are the true Subjects of his Love and Grace.

3. From our Text and Discourse we are taught what should be the governing Principle, and the main Design of those, who undertake the Work of the Ministry.

The Principle from which they should act, and by which they should be govern'd, ought to be *unfeigned Love to JESUS CHRIST*. And their grand Design, not merely to *serve themselves*, but to *feed the Flock of CHRIST*.—

And this Instruction has an immediate Look to the Person, that is in a few Minutes more, to receive a most solemn and awful Charge, *To feed the Flock of GOD in this Place*. Unto You therefore, DEAR SIR, I would now address myself with the most tender Affection and Concern, while I am faithful to GOD, his People and my own Soul. I am sensible that the Weight which lies upon your Spirits, at the near View of what you are entering upon, must be very great and pressing. And I would not unnecessarily
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add thereto; but rather help you to proper Arguments for Support and Comfort.

However, you will suffer me to observe a few things, that may contribute to your improving what has been said, to the best Advantage.---That you may not only see the *Necessity* of your *Loving CHRIST*, but that you may be excited to reach more earnestly after *this Grace*.

You are now about to receive at the Hand of *CHRIST*, by us his Ministers, the Flock which he has in this Place, to watch over it and feed it. And, doubtless, what you have heard this Day, has put your Thoughts upon a fresh Enquiry after the Qualification that has been urged. Yea, and there is good Reason for it.---For the *LORD JESUS* is saying to you, this Day, as he did to *Peter*, *LOVEST THOU ME?* And we hope that you can, thro' Grace, lift up your Head and say, *YEA, LORD, THOU KNOWEST THAT I LOVE THEE* If we had not comfortable Hope, of your *Loving the LORD JESUS*, in Sincerity and Truth, we should not dare to commit his Sheep to your Watch.

But now, as to a *Lover of JESUS CHRIST*, we can chearfully say unto you, in his Name, *Take thou the Oversight of this his Flock---Feed his Lambs, feed his Sheep.*

O remember, yea always bear in Mind, what a precious Jewel this is, which the *LORD* commits to your Trust. 'Tis *his Flock---The People of his Pasture---The Sheep of his Hand.* 'Tis a Part of the Flock that he has purchased with his own Blood. And therefore you must think that he sets great Store by it---that he has a tender Love for it. And in his Love he has been Chastening and Scourging of it.

'Tis an afflicted People.---The Hand of the *LORD* has touched them in the most sensible Part. For they have

have known what it is to be fed by Shepherds who loved the LORD JESUS CHRIST; and who loved them with the dearest Affection. But GOD, in his sovereign Pleasure, has taken them away.—He has given this People Blow upon Blow; and they have had Sorrow upon Sorrow. While they were weeping over and lamenting the *Death of one dear Pastor*, (a) flourishing in Youth, in ministerial Gifts and christian Graces; saying with *David*, *I am distressed for thee, my Brother Jonathan, very pleasant hast thou been unto me*—Behold, the aged Man of GOD, (b) who had been their Guide from their Youth, gives up the Ghost and dies! And now their Mourning is renewed.—They cry after him, with throbbing Breasts, *My Father, my Father, the Chariot of Israel and the Horsemen thereof*. And they saw him no more.—Bereaved thus of both their Pastors, they call for Pity and Compassion, in the moving Language of Zion in Distress, *Behold, (all ye that pass by) and see if there be any Sorrow like unto my Sorrow!*

And now, of a Flock thus dear to CHRIST—thus sorely try'd and afflicted, are you to take the Oversight and Charge. And you are to stand in CHRIST'S Stead to minister unto them.

Let me then exhort and pray you for CHRIST'S sake, to *feed them well*. Shew your Love to CHRIST, by feeding them tenderly and faithfully. Feed them with all Kind of Gospel-Food, that they may be built up in CHRIST, rooted and established in Faith. Let every Lamb and Sheep have their Portion in season, that none may have any Reason to complain.

(a) The Reverend Mr. Jonathan Helyer, Ordain'd June 20 1744. Died May 27 1745. Aged 27 Years.

(b) The Reverend Mr. Nathanael Clap, who began his Ministry here, Anno 1695, Ordain'd A. D. 1720. Died Octo. 30 1745. Aged 79 Years, after he had preached the Gospel at Newport 50 Years.

Shun not to declare the whole Counsel of GOD to your People. Keep nothing back from them, which GOD has taught you in his Word to be profitable for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, Instruction in Righteousness. But seasonably reprove, rebuke and exhort *with all Longsuffering and Doctrine.*

Let all the Wretchedness of Man by Nature, be faithfully display'd, and the Fulness there is in CHRIST laid open; that Sinners may be bro't to see that they *must be justified freely, by GOD's Grace, thro' the Redemption that is in JESUS CHRIST.*

And be not afraid, nor ashamed to own, stand by and maintain the Doctrines of JESUS CHRIST, concerning the great Salvation. But let your Love to CHRIST appear, by your Love for, and steadfast Adherence to his Truths; that your People, and all Men may know *that you are set for the Defence of the Gospel.*

Let Sinners be faithfully warn'd to flee from the Wrath to come, and never let them have any Rest or Peace in their Consciences until they accept of JESUS CHRIST. O pray them in CHRIST's stead to be reconciled to GOD.

Let Believers, under all Conditions, find you a tender-hearted Shepherd, and a faithful Friend. Remember and imitate the gentle Behaviour of your glorious LORD.—He would not break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoking Flax. You are, therefore, to confirm the feeble Knees and to strengthen weak Hands, and say to them that are of a fearful Heart, be strong, fear not, your GOD cometh with a Recompence, he will come and Save you.

Let me further tell you, that you owe your whole Self, Soul and Body to JESUS CHRIST. All your Time and all your Service is *his*.—He justly claims it all. And in and thro' CHRIST, you owe yourself and service to *This People*, who have shown their Affection and Esteem for you, by their unanimous Choice.

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Now then, let every Family under your Care, the poor as well as the rich, the afflicted as well as the joyful and prosperous, be *visited* by you, and receive their Proportion of Benefit from you; that you may never fall under the Reproof of those cruel and unfaithful Pastors, spoken of by the Prophet *Jeremiab*, Chap. 23. ver. 2. *You have scattered my Flock and have driven them away, and have not visited them.*

In a word, Let every Member of the Flock, old and young, rich and poor, bond and free (so far as 'tis practicable) be assur'd of your thoughtfulness of them, by seasonable Notice and proper Expressions of Regard. Attend every Branch of feeding.—Make full Proof of your Ministry.—Let none despise thy Youth.

You see that your Sphere of Action is large.—The Work before you is exceeding great and difficult.—surpassing the Wisdom and Strength even of Angels themselves. Who then is sufficient for these things? Hear your blessed Master saying, *my Grace is sufficient for you.* Love to JESUS CHRIST, will carry you thro' it all.

We may assure you, that if you are faithful, you will meet with many Tryals---numberless Impediments---unthought of and amazing Difficulties will make up in your Way---Enemies in various Shapes will appear---Temptations violent and strong will beset you, all to turn you away from your Duty. But you are to endure Hardness as a good Soldier of JESUS CHRIST. Love to CHRIST, and close Adherence to his Crown and Interest will animate you to fight the good Fight of Faith, so that you may lay hold on eternal Life.

You are to seek the Peace and Unity of your People among themselves: And see that you so behave as to merit their Love and Esteem for you; rejoicing if you may always possess it.—But be not surprized nor discouraged, if it should be otherwise:

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stand in the Gap before the LORD, that he may not destroy you. And you ought to look upon it as one of the greatest Mercies under Heaven, that GOD now offers you a Pastor, who, you have so much Reason to hope, has a hearty Love to JESUS CHRIST.

He that ascended up on high and received Gifts for Men, is now sending of you one of the richest Gifts that he has to bestow upon his Church. And oh, with what thankful Hearts should you receive it! — Your Hearts and Tongues should join in the Apostle's Doxology, saying, *Blessed be the GOD and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who is blessing of us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in CHRIST JESUS.*

But then, how much concern'd should you be, to make a good Improvement of this Gift? — The Present sent you, this Day, from the chief Shepherd, the great Lover of Souls? — As it is, doubtless, matter of Grief to the *serious* among you, that you profited no more — that you grew no faster, under the watchful Hand of your former Pastors; so it is very becoming that you now resolve, by the Grace of GOD, that you will more earnestly endeavour to get all possible Good by *this*.

To which End, I beseech you, put on the Temper of Christians indeed. Behave yourselves towards the LORD JESUS, and towards this his Servant, as becomes the Sheep and Lambs of his Fold.

As such, be ye very humble in the whole of your Walk towards GOD. — Be quiet, peaceable and gentle in your Behaviour towards one another. — *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's Sake hath forgiven you.*

And especially, as Sheep, be dutiful and submissive, tender and respectful towards the Watchman of your Souls. Always shew a Willingness and Desire to be fed by him, in all the Branches of that solemn Trust. Get
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and keep yourselves forever in a suitable Posture to be fed. Be always looking to G O D that he would deal out Gospel Dainties unto you ; begging of him to bless them, that you may grow thereby. And be always searching for Food.---Seek not for *Faults*, but for *Food* in all his Administrations. Watch, with your Mouths open to catch every Crumb of divine Truth that falls ; and thankfully receive every Morsel.---

In every Way, that you possibly can, you are to assist, strengthen and encourage him in the whole of his Work. Fail not to visit him, and acquaint yourselves, in a suitable Manner, with his *Wants*, *Temptations* and *Impediments* ;---kindly stretching out your Hand to remove them. Particularly, let your Hand be strong with him, in the Critical, tho' Important Affair of Disciplining Offenders, that the Temple may be purged and kept clean. Say unto him, *Arise ; for this Matter belongeth unto thee : We also, will be with thee, be of good Courage, and do it.*---But I may not further enlarge.---

Finally, *Brethren*, Pray for him daily, in your Families, in your Closets, and with all Prayer ; that G O D would be always with him, teaching, guiding, strengthening of him.---That he would make *him Rich* with the Gifts and Graces of his blessed Spirit ; and that *you*, under his Ministry, may not be barren nor unfruitful, in the Knowledge of JESUS CHRIST, but may grow and abound in every Grace.

And now, *we bow the Knee to the G O D and Father of our LORD JESU CHRIST*, that he would grant you, according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man ; that CHRIST may dwell in your Hearts by Faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in Love, may be able to Comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth and Length and Depth and Height ; and to know the Love of CHRIST, which

which passeth Knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the Fulness of G O D. (d)

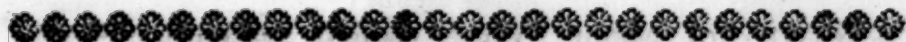
I would very gladly address the whole Assembly, upon this solemn, joyful Occasion, with such Instructions and Exhortations as the Text and Doctrine afford me.—I would solemnly enquire and demand of you, whether you love CHRIST or not? Declaring unto you, in the Name of G O D, that if any Man of you all loves not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be *Anathema Marathana*—Let him be accursed bitterly. And I would invite and perswade you all to come and embrace the LORD JESUS, that you may know from your own Experience, *That his Mouth is most sweet—that his Love is better than Wine.*—O Taste and see that the L O R D is Good.—

But I have too far exceeded my Bounds already.--- I can only recommend you to the Mercy of G O D, which is all the Refuge you have.— *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be Glory in the Church by CHRIST JESUS, throughout all Ages, World without End.*

A M E N.



(d) Eph. 3. 14—16, 17, 18, 19, verses.



The C H A R G E.

WHEREAS this Flock of CHRIST hath called you, on whom we impose our Hands, to the Pastoral Office, and you have accepted thereof: We solemnly charge you before GOD, and our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his Appearing and Kingdom.

Study the holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise to Salvation, thro' Faith which is in CHRIST JESUS; and which are profitable for Doctrine; for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that you may be a Man of GOD, perfect, thro'ly furnished unto all good Works.

Feed the Flock of CHRIST, taking the Oversight of it, not by Constraint, but willingly, not for filthy Lucre's sake, but of a ready Mind, not as being Lord over GOD's Heritage, but an Example to the Flock.

Take heed to your Self, and to the whole Flock, over which the HOLY GHOST now makes you an Overseer, to feed the Church of GOD, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.

Preach the Word, be instant in Season and out of Season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all Longsuffering, and Doctrine.

Determine to know nothing but JESUS CHRIST and him crucified; preach not your Self, but CHRIST JESUS the LORD, and the great Doctrines and Precepts of his Gospel, and this do, not with enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but in the Demonstration of the Spirit, and with Power, and see to it, that you experience and practice, what you preach to, and press upon others; and be not as many who corrupt the Word of GOD, but as of Sincerity, but as of GOD, in the Sight of GOD, speak you in CHRIST—

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Strive not about Words which are to no Profit, but to the subverting the Hearers ; and study to shew yourself a Workman, that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, and so take Heed to yourself and to your Doctrine, that you may save yourself and them that hear you —

You are set this Day a Watchman over this Flock, and have the Care of their Souls committed to you, hear the Word then from G O D's Mouth, and warn Sinner's from him, and declare to them the whole Countel of G O D, as you would not have their Blood required at your Hands another Day.

CHRIST JESUS the great Shepherd of the Sheep, now makes you an Under-Shepherd to this his Flock, see then that you feed his Lambs and Sheep, and do it from Love to CHRIST.

Administer with a becoming Seriousness and Solemnity, the holy Sacraments of the New Testament, *Baptism* and the *L O R D's Supper* to the proper Subjects of them, and neglect not that holy Discipline and Government, which CHRIST hath directed to in his Word.—Let your Conversation be as becomes the Gospel of CHRIST, and a Minister of the Gospel. Give none Offence to the *Jews*, nor to the *Gentiles*, nor to the Church of G O D, nor do any thing for which the Ministry may be blamed.

Be harmless as the Steward of G O D, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to Wine, not a Striker, not greedy of filthy Lucre ; but a Lover of Hospitality, a Lover of good Men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful Word, that you may be able by sound Doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the Gainsayers.

Shew yourself in all Things, a Pattern of good Works, in Doctrine, shewing Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary Part may be ashamed, having no evil Thing to say of you.

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Let no Man despise you, therefore be not a No-vice, least being lift up with Pride, you fall into the Condemnation of the Devil. But be an Example to Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Faith, in Spirit, in Purity; and neglect not the Gift that is in you, but give attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine

Expect to meet with many things, which are hard to bear, but let none of them move you, nor count your Life dear to you, so you may finish your Course with Joy, and the Ministry you have received of the LORD JESUS.

And since the Prophets do not live forever, and the Priests are not suffered to continue by Reason of Death, Live and act under realizing Views of your Frailty and Mortality; and from the Consideration thereof, be quickened to Diligence and Fidelity in your Master's Work, and excited (after the Example of your GREAT LORD) to work the Work of him that sent you, while it is Day, because the Night cometh in which no Man can Work.

Since also, the Time is Coming when all (we that preach, and they who hear us) must appear at the Judgment-Seat of CHRIST; see to it that you watch for Souls, as one that must give an Account, that you may do it with Joy and not with Grief.—

But who is sufficient for these Things? Go therefore to JESUS, the great Head of the Church, and to the Father thro' him, and seek for his Spirit and Grace, without which you can do nothing, and thro' which you can do all Things. Give yourself to Prayer, pray always and without Fainting; pray for yourself, let all your Studies be begun, carried on and ended with Prayer; and pray for others, especially for this Flock which is now committed to your Care and Charge; Wrestle with

GOD

GOD and travail in Birth for them and theirs,
till you see **CHRIST** formed in them.

And if through Grace you shall be enabled to
do This, know it for your Encouragement and
Support; you may then hope that you shall not
labour in vain, but win Souls to **CHRIST**; and
having turned many to Righteousness, shall shine
as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the
Stars forever and ever.

AMEN and AMEN.



But who is sufficient for these Things? Go there-
fore to Jesus, the great Head of the Church, and
to the Father thro' him, and seek for his Spirit
and Grace, without which you can do nothing, and
that which you can do all Things. Give yourself
to Prayer, pray always and without fainting; pray
for yourself, let all your Studies be begun, car-
ried on and ended with Prayer; and pray for o-
thers especially for this flock which is now com-
mitted to your Care and Charge; Wrestle with

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GOD

The Right Hand of FELLOWSHIP.

BRETHREN and BELOVED,

WE, who are Messengers of the Churches of **OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**, having been desired to be present this Day to behold and bear Witness unto your Faith and Order in the Gospel, and to be helpful to you therein, being well satisfied with your Proceedings; and perceiving the Grace that is given to you;—

I am required and improved in the Name of these Messengers, and so in behalf of those Churches which we represent, to give unto your Selves and your honoured Pastor, *The Right Hand of Fellowship*, according to that Gospel Custom we read of in *Gal. 2. 9.*

In Consequence hereof, I do now present unto you, **Reverend and Dear Sir**, *Our Right Hand of Fellowship*, hereby intimating unto you, that we do own and acknowledge you as our Beloved Brother, in **OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**, and your Brethren as a Church of the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**, rightly constituted according to the Gospel of our blessed SAVIOUR; and that absent, as well as now, we shall remember you, as our *little Sister*, at the Throne of Grace; as also that we shall be willing at all times to afford unto you your Help, Advice and Counsel, as there may be Necessity, for your Comfort and Furtherance in the Way of **CHRIST**; earnestly desiring that you, *Brother Vinal*, may obtain Mercy to be faithful, faithful to **G O D** and your own Soul, and to the Souls of those over whom the

the HOLY GHOST has now made you an Overseer ; and that this Church, as they have received CHRIST, may walk in Him, and grow in Grace, and be increased with the Increasing of GOD : And then know assuredly that when the *Great Shepherd* of the Sheep shall appear, your little Flock shall receive a Kingdom, and your Self a Crown of Glory, which shall never fade away.

And thus, Brethren beloved in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, I cannot but mind unto you that saying of our Blessed Redeemer in *Joh. 10. 27. My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them and they follow me.* And upon it would add, that we who are the Elders and Delegates of the Churches, do joyfully observe the Fulfilment thereof among you this day, in that it has pleased the *Great Shepherd* of the Sheep to incline yourselves to hear his Voice, and thus far to follow Him : We do truly joy to behold your Faith and Order, and the Grace of GOD bestowed on you, hoping you are of the little Flock, for whom a Kingdom is prepared.

And as for you, Sir, we look upon you as our Brother in CHRIST, a Fellow-Labourer in his Vineyard, and do wish you may be made *strong in the LORD and in the Power of his Might*, to defend his Truth and to contend for the Faith, and that so doing you and your Flock may meet together in Glory.

And I pray you, the Brethren of this Church, to observe what I have to say further, which is, That I earnestly desire and advise you to live in Peace and follow after it, and your Pastor, so far as he follows CHRIST :—Don't be discouraged because of your repeated Tryals—and the Difficulties you may meet with—*Resist the Devil and he shall flee.*

See from you. — May a double Portion of the excellent and pious Spirit of your lately deceased Pastors (now with GOD) and, *My Brother*, the same Spirit of your incomparable Predecessors, descend and rest on you, and on us all, henceforth and forever. And now the GOD of Peace that brought again from the Dead, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro' the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, thro' JESUS CHRIST: To whom be Glory forever and ever.



A M E N.



I have now to read a double Portion of the ex-
 cellent and pious spirit of your lately dedicated Pa-
 ter (our wish G O D) and, Mr. Brother, the
 same spirit of your incomparable Benediction, de-
 cent and all on you, and on us all, henceforth
 and forever. And now the G O D of Peace that
 brought again from the Dead, our Lord Jesus
 Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro'
 the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you
 perfect in every good Work, to do his Will,
 working in you that which is well-pleasing in his
 Sight, thro' Jesus Christ: To whom be Glory
 forever and ever.



M E W.

